

- Topic: Common Witness: Proselytism and Social Witness
in Catholic and Pentecostal Theological Reflection
- Moderator: Jeffrey Gros, National Conference of Catholic Bishops
- Presenter: Ralph del Colle, Marquette University

The decree on ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council made the shift from an "ecclesiology of return" to an "ecclesiology of dialogue" as the Catholic approach to other churches and ecclesial communities. Since the Council, formal dialogues have developed with eight communions with the goal of full communion. However, unforeseen in the Council was the large evangelical Christian community and the prospect of interest in dialogue on the part of churches who do not see visible unity as warranted in the Gospel. Today there are dialogues with the Mennonites, the World Evangelical Fellowship, the Baptist World Alliance, the Holiness churches through the World Methodist Council, and Pentecostal churches and scholars. Most productive among these has been the Pentecostal/Catholic dialogue, sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity on the Catholic side.

Dr. Ralph del Colle presented a paper on the results of the most recent dialogue: "Evangelization, Proselytism, and Common Witness." Del Colle surveyed the historical and theological context of the Pentecostal revival of the early twentieth century. He outlined how this movement, largely within the Holiness, Independent, and Baptist churches, eventually crystallized into denominations that we today call the "classical Pentecostal churches." Within these churches there are three principle streams: the Pentecostal Holiness churches with a Wesleyan *ordo salutis*, the so-called "finished work" churches and the non-trinitarian "Jesus-only" churches. He further elaborated how the Pentecostal/charismatic movement emerged in the traditional Protestant and Catholic churches in the 1960s, and the Pentecostal Catholic dialogue developed in the 1970s. He provided some detailed theological reflection on the theology of grace and of the charisms in the classical Pentecostal traditions and related this to Catholic developments, especially those of Karl Rahner. He also reviewed the emergence of pneumatological themes in Catholic theology from the Tübingen School through Pius XII and the Second Vatican Council.

He outlined the relationship of faith and experience in Pentecostalism and contemporary Catholic thinking. He went on, in explicating "Evangelization, Proselytism, and Common Witness," to give an overview of the earlier dialogue results which bear on conversion, evangelism, and evaluation of one another, among Pentecostal and Catholic scholars. It is the author's conviction that "it is in this realm of faith, grace and experience that the heart of the dialogue lies." With the growth of Pentecostalism, its focus on active evangelism, and the encounter of Catholics and Pentecostals, especially in Latin America, these questions of soteriology and mission have important pastoral implications.

The conclusions of the paper focused on the definition of proselytism as unfair or unethical means employed in evangelism. The author evaluated this as the strongest text, among the various Catholic dialogues on proselytism. It is also an agreement that will be more challenging to Pentecostals than to Catholics, since evangelism is so central to the identity of the Pentecostal movement, and the traditional position that salvation for Catholics may be problematic.

Discussion explored both the theological issues raised in Catholic and Pentecostal dialogue and some of the pastoral implications concerned.

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